



November 13, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

Inside the front cover of every U.S. Passport is inscribed the following message: "The Secretary of State of the United States of America hereby requests all whom it may concern to permit the citizen/national of the United States named herein to pass without delay or hindrance and in case of need to give all lawful aid and protection."

We respectfully submit that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has flagrantly ignored this request along with basic rule of law and due process. Further, it is clear that you have gone out of your way to avoid pressuring the regime to comply.

My own cousin, Oregon-born Bader al-Ibrahim, has been detained for over 18 months in solitary confinement and denied access to a lawyer or contact with his family. A respected physician and journalist, he has yet to be charged with any crime. And you have yet to raise his case in any of your visits to Saudi Arabia.

Another American being held is Salah al-Haidar, son of women's rights activist Aziza al-Yousef. Loujain al-Hathloul, the sister of a U.S. citizen, has been detained and tortured for over two years, ironically having been arrested for her successful campaign to gain women the right to drive a car. Abdulrahman AlSadhan, a Saudi Red Crescent staffer and son and brother of U.S. citizens, has been detained and tortured without charges since March 2018.

There are many more, and — while it would be ambitious for you to demand the regime release all prisoners of conscience — it is unthinkable that you have not forcefully sought the freedom of even one American or their relatives. As every U.S. Passport makes clear, this is your most basic obligation as Secretary of State.

Your participation in next week's G-20 Summit in Riyadh is evidence that the Saudi regime has faced no substantive consequences for openly violating the rights of American citizens, residents, and their relatives. Years have passed since the CIA directly implicated Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the grisly murder of U.S. resident Jamal Khashoggi, and he has yet to face repercussions.

Since this will most likely be your final official visit to Saudi Arabia, I call on you to finally raise these cases publicly in your meetings and public appearances in the Kingdom. Mr. Secretary,

you need not leave behind such a shameful legacy. You still have this final chance to stand up for American principles and for American citizens — those whom you have sworn to protect.

Please do not rely on quiet, gentle diplomacy anymore, whether non-committal references in the press or polite admonishments behind closed doors. Somehow, you have been able to free American hostages from U.S. adversaries like North Korea, Iran and Syria, including this week's happy release of journalist Austin Tice. So it is all the more outrageous that a U.S. ally and economic partner like Saudi Arabia continues to hold our relatives effectively as hostages, with no tangible repercussions from the United States.

I am publishing this as an open letter because all our private entreaties and all the petitions of human rights organizations and Members of Congress appear not to have resulted in any measurable actions by you or your staff.

Time is running out, as these brave and innocent souls languish in isolation and terror, and more recently with the added threat of Covid-19 spreading through overcrowded Saudi prisons.

I will be happy to arrange a consultation for you with relatives and other campaigners on behalf of our Saudi-held hostages. But your relevant staff are already well aware of each case and its status.

What we need now — and what I expect as a U.S. citizen — is for you to speak up, speak out, and demand justice for those bearing State Department-issued U.S. Passports and for their loved ones.

Sincerely,



Ali AlAhmed  
Executive Director